756 554 witchdoctors of the vicinity, who never declare the man beyond recovery but bend their every effort in making a great show of their ridiculous and childish practices in order to make death keep away. Gathered, then, in the invalid's hut, they stand about him at some little distance in a semicircle and do not take their eyes off him but observe his every movement with care. They begin to blow and gesture with their hands, now forcefully and with verve, now slowly and softly according as they see that the patient seems more fatigued or gets back some of his strength; and all this in order to pretend that they see death approaching and are trying to chase it away. In the [533] same manner they begin to sing in base, funereal tones an air similar to a continuous harsh howling, and, being guided by the condition of the invalid they modify their expressions, gestures and tone of voice. The stricken person for his part always tries, by means of his fatigue, his cries or moans, his frightened eyes and perturbed expression to let the others know what he is feeling and the state he considers himself to be in; and the witchdoctors, following these obvious signs, gesticulate more or less, blow and howl with greater or less softness [606] or loudness, come close and hurl themselves wildly towards the invalid or gently fall back a short distance. When it seems that the sick man is about to die they come at a bound so close to him, heightening their gestures to such a pitch and howling so unceasingly and in such broken, forced and hoarse tones, with eyes so wide open and fearful and with so many expressions of terror, that anyone could easily be led to believe that they do in fact see death in the guise of some deformed and terrible figure and that they wish to frighten it, make it flee or seize it. All this is done so seriously and naturally that no one would suspect them of perpetrating a hoax or deceiving; but the fact is that even if the invalid were still able to live for a while, terror would soon finish him off."

"The witchdoctors are also believed to have the power to drive away and make disappear plagues and calamities such as smallpox, which wreaks havoc among them; the lack of water or its excess and other things. To this end the witchdoctors meet, go off a little way from the camp and, seated upon the ground, like so many Jeremiahs, begin to sing their lamentations, without words of course, accompanying ● [534] the sad song with the choc-que-choc produced by the coming together of small stones placed in a hollow gourd which they hold in their hands and rattle to beat time."

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

Chapter XIV.

2. Other kinds of conjuration.

From what has been stated above of the social customs of the Chaco Indians, we realize that there is hardly any important event in the life of these natives which is not celebrated with religious or magical ceremonies of some kind. Generally these ceremonies are simple: drumming, the shaking of rattles, dancing and chanting form the main features in all of them. A few words may be said in this connection about the magical instruments, the *drum* and the *rattle*.

The drum, which is called *usyúk* by the Choroti, *huitsyúk* by the Mataco and *kaltaki* by the Tobas, is known to all Pilcomayo tribes, although it is nowadays little used by the Bolivian Tobas. It is a simple instrument, consisting of a small clay pot which is covered with a goat's or deer's skin. In beating the drum only one stick is used. Generally the pot is partly filled with water — a detail which I cannot exactly account for, since it has no perceptible influence upon the tone of the instrument. Probably the water is believed to eke out in some way its magical efficacy. The drum is the principal magical instrument of the Argentine Mataco who use the rattle gourd less, whereas, on the other hand, the Choroti, who also use both instruments, seem to appreciate the rattle more. In a Mataco village the drum is at work nearly every day: sometimes the spirit of a dead Indian is frightened away with it, sometimes other evil spirits, disease-spirits, spirits of hurricanes, tempests, drought, etc. are conjured with it; sometimes the Indians try to influence the good spirits animating trees and plants with it, so as to effect an abundant harvest of algaroba and chañar. The Choroti again mainly use the drum during the algaroba season, when the instrument is beaten both day and night. In a Choroti village where I lived for several months, an Indian sorcerer was specially engaged for this important ceremony.

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2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

M C 789 534

The object of the drumming was to »hurry on» the ripening of the algaroba and the chañar fruits, and at the same time to frighten away the evil spirits of hurricanes and tempests which frequently blight these trees at the time when they are flowering. Drought is another great danger to a rich algaroba and chañar harvest. By means of drumming the demons, who cause drought by keeping rain back, are conjured. In some cases it seems as if the drumming Indian, by the very time in which he is beating his drum, were imitating the fall of the rain-drops. The Choroti drummer seldom wears the rattle-belt (*tahús*), which on the other hand seems to be regarded as indispensable by the Mataco drummer. The latter, when he is beating the drum, continually moves his body up and down and from one side to the other in order that the rattle which he wears round the waist may make a noise.

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The other of the two principal magical instruments of the Chaco Indians is the rattle gourd, called *poketá* by the Tobas, *votsotáh* by the Mataco, and *pelīte* by the Choroti. It consists of a round or oval bottle-gourd, hollowed out through a small opening in the tapering stem, and then filled with dry seeds, generally of tusca, small shells, beads, or other things producing a rattling sound. The outside is often ornamented with lines, triangles, squares, or other geometric designs. The instrument, when shaken, is believed to have a remarkable »power», which is partly due to the magical properties of the gourd itself, partly to the seeds or other things with which it is filled, partly to the geometric figures with which the outside of the gourd is ornamented. The instrument is used much on the same occasions and for the same purposes as the drum. I have stated, however, that the *Choroti* not only use the *pelīte* to frighten away or conjure evil spirits in general, but also for certain positive ends. To shake the rattle is in the Choroti language called *nekeālitse;* when it is shaken for a special purpose they use the expression *nekeālitse sīmā*, which means more or less: »to shake the rattle to obtain something». Thus I have mentioned that during the marriage and courtship dances such young men as are despised by the girls are in the habit of shaking their rattles in order to »hurry on» the latter and to have greater success in love. Similarly, when a young man goes out to find a bride in connection with the dances, his father at home continually shakes the rattle to »hurry on» the girls on behalf of his son and promote his important undertaking. There are many other instances of the same kind. When the Choroti women go out in the forest in the morning to collect algaroba beans for the brewing of the sacred beer or other wild

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3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

cine-man why he has come. He answers, »I came to have a talk, to call on you and become your friend.» They become friends.

V. Origin of the Rio Bermejo

The Rio Bermejo is very deep for it was dug by a big *tatu careta* (giant armadillo) who wanted to go to the source of the river.

VI. The New Moon

When there is a new moon, the Indians dance and beat on their drums (*pimpim*). The man who plays a drum wears a belt with hanging pendants of metal, hoofs and so on. They put water into the drum so that the hide will not get dry.

VII. Menstruation

It is the moon who sleeps first with the girls and that is why they menstruate. When a young girl is menstruating for the first time, she must begin working and doing all she will have to do later on. If she does not keep active during this period, then she will be lazy all her life. She must be in semi-seclusion for five days, only going out with her father's permission. She may not marry or have sexual intercourse until after her first menstruation. When a woman is menstruating, she must not go to the bush where she could easily become frightened and die.

VIII. Eclipses

An eclipse of the sun or moon foretells disease. When either the sun or moon becomes angry with men it covers itself. To have it uncover it is necessary to beat drums, shout, sing and to make all kinds of noise. When the sun is covered one may expect smallpox.

755 ing to the disease while an old woman, who was a magician, sang and blew on the patient. The others were talking among themselves without paying any attention to what was happening. After a pause, during which everybody drank some of the wine required by the disease, a singing man started to run around the patient, his body bent forward and his arms dangling. The chief medicine-man spoke once more with disease while the medicine-woman continued blowing on the patient and another medicine-man placed around the head of the patient front pages of illustrated papers and popular novels. The man who was running stopped and the chief medicine-man started talking with the others. Everybody sat down and drank some water, then two women began to walk rapidly around the others while they sang. One of them stopped and after a short while the other [535] one stopped too. Then all who were present started dancing. The dance was interrupted only by the coughing of the patient who seemed to be growing weaker and weaker. She actually died during the ceremony. Immediately after her [764] death the dance stopped. The old women ran about singing and shaking their rattles. Two men laid the dead woman on her right side and folded her legs and arms. They wrapped her in the pieces of cloth on which she had been lying and she was taken to her home. The medicine-men undressed quietly while the women of the family uttered lamentations.

c) *General Expulsion of Disease*

755 292 The ceremony for general expulsion of disease took place early in the morning in the open air, far from all houses. It was performed by all the medicine-men of the village standing in a row. All were holding in their hands a rattle-gourd [534] and a bone whistle. Some were provided with strips of cloth to which were attached rattles; the strips were worn across the chest or hung at the elbow. Others wore ceremonial shirts, some wore shirts made of *caraguatá* fiber and one

584 make their appearance, and having studied the chosen cavalier join him in the
836 dance, holding him by the shoulder or around his body (Fig. 2). Either during or
[535] immediately after the dance the girl draws away her elected partner, taking him as a rule to the house of her parents.

302 The introduction to a pre-marital sexual relation can naturally take place in
832 some other manner. It often happens that a young man desiring a sweetheart paints a particular pattern on his face, a large red oval or circle containing small white spots on both cheeks. Everybody then knows that he is seeking a girl, and he is called *kystithli*. The day after, perhaps even the same day, a girl will be seen painted with the same pattern. She is called *samaklandi*, because by her painting she indicates that she accepts him. This method also shows that it is the girl who
836 makes the choice. He makes himself available both at the nightly dance and by painting himself, and she is free to accept him or to refrain from so doing. I was
[558] assured many times that a young man so selected has no chance of excusing him-
[548] self; he would lose face if he attempted to do so, and would call down upon him-
[182] self the anger of the girl's family. A young man who is not chosen by a girl despite his wish can in the meantime console himself with one of the village prostitutes, who appear to have precisely this function, as extra-marital infidelity with a prostitute is regarded as valid unfaithfulness.

301 It has already been mentioned that young men and women seeking love can
832 often be recognized by the painting of their faces and by a general urge to adorn themselves. Also restricted to this period are a special broad armlet made of black and white beads, and—particularly for the girls—an ordinary white string of beads from which depend red woollen cords with bead tassels that hang down the
832 neck (Fig. 1). Young men who seek or have just found a sweetheart, traditionally
[533] evince great musicality, and are practically the only ones who play the Jew's harp
[534] and a primitive musical bow. The music gives expression to longing and un-
[304] requited love. Young couples have a special form of caress, pressing the cheek of their partners with the points of their nails. This leaves behind small wounds visible for a week or more, and is proof of great infatuation.

836 When a girl has found a sweetheart no secret is made of the fact; at all events all the young people in the village will be aware of the various short-lived unions that have begun. But when she brings her lover home at night to her parents' house they nevertheless evince a form of discretion. The parents pretend to be asleep whilst the young ones creep in; but the father, as though by chance, may cause the fire to blaze up so that he can see whom the girl has chosen. He then lies down to rest. It is often said of a young couple who in this way commence intimate relations that "they have begun to be married". This means that they have
583 836 commenced a kind of trial marriage the result of which is far from certain. The
[581] girl has primarily chosen her sweetheart on the basis of an undefined mixture of
[582] sexual attraction and other propensities, whereas the girl's parents wish to limit the choice to those economically acceptable. Early the next morning the new

/211/

755 [114] In the course of the mission to the Argentinian Chaco of which I was in charge during 1932-1933, I had the opportunity of being present at a certain number of ceremonies for the expulsion of illnesses, or evil spirits.

[753] [774] The Matako /Mataco/ Indians do not seem to be acquainted with any other medicine than magical medicine; that is normal since the illness takes the image of the sick person and not his body.

Among the ceremonies described below, a distinction can be made between those from which the whole village benefits and those from which only a single sick person benefits.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illnesses for All the Village

(April 8, 1933).

755 756 783 796 [534] [242] [237] [302] This ceremony took place in the morning in the open air rather far from the houses, and was carried out by all the medicine men /the English term is used/ of the village. They were arranged in a row facing east, and all had a maraca and a bone whistle in their hands. Some of them were carrying bands of rattles, either in the hand, slung over the shoulder, or hooked over the elbows. Some officiants were dressed in red wool ceremonial shirts spangled with rings of shells, and others in war shirts made of caraguata thread. Almost all were wearing red headbands decorated with feathers or hats adorned with ostrich feathers, and most had a bunch of ostrich feathers in the hand. The faces of the principal medicine men were daubed with red and black, and those of the women with red. Facing the row of officiants were planted several arrows, points down, and a lance with the point up. In the course of the ceremony a bunch of ostrich feathers was attached to the top of the lance. When I arrived at the spot, I noticed a young /212/ man crushing ha'tax seeds in a gourd which the medicine men would take later.

2: Nordenskiöld E-5 (1908-1909)1919
SK6 Choroti
Ashluslay SK5
Matáco SI7

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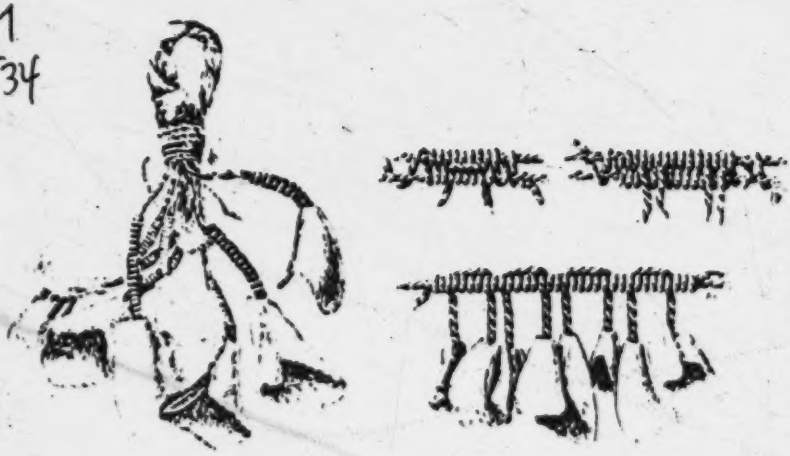

a. b.

Fig. 92. Rattles made of the claws of animals.
a G. M. (B. 208) 1/2. Ashluslay.
b R. M. (M. 241) 1/4. Matáco.